



Cheryl Crotser PhD, RN, NE-BC and Susanne Mohnkern PhD, RN, CNE

# Preparation to Provide Spiritual Care: A Qualitative Study

# The Problem



Holistic/Whole Person Care



Code of Ethics for Nurses  
Compassion & Respect



Less than 50% of Nurses  
Provide Spiritual Care



Integration of Spiritual Care in  
Education

# Purpose and Aims

## Purpose

- Understand experiences of recent graduates in learning to provide spiritual support in the clinical arena and their perceptions of preparation for this role.

## Specific Aims

- Describe experiences in provision of spiritual support
- Gain increased understanding of educational experiences that were most helpful in developing their confidence in their role in spiritual care
- Share practical advice for faculty in preparing students for holistic care including spiritual support.

# Setting

- Faith Based Christian Liberal Arts School

The Roberts Wesleyan Nursing Department is a learning community grounded in the Christian faith and committed to excellence in nursing through innovative education, scholarship and service.

- Department of Nursing

- Traditional Undergraduate
- RN to BS Program
- Graduate Programs in Nursing Leadership and Nursing Education
- Online and Classroom Cohorts



# Design

- Interpretive Phenomenology
- Human Subjects Protection approval
- Purposive sampling using postal letters and email notices
- Informed consent and in-depth interviews (in-person or by phone)
- Team interpretation to identify common themes
- Member check

# Participants

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<b>Age</b>	21-24	9
	31-35	2
	>35	1
<b>Current Work Setting</b>	Acute Care, Academic Medical Center	4
	Acute Care, Community Hospital	6
	Home Care/ Clinic	2
<b>Faith Tradition</b>	Christian - no denomination specified	9
	Catholic	1
	Lutheran	1
	Free Methodist	1
<b>Health Care Setting</b>	Rural	2
	Urban	10
<b>Student Status</b>	Traditional	9
	Transfer	3



# Defining Spiritual Care





# Learning Spiritual Care: Experiences Before College

- Some students viewed nursing as a calling and saw connections between nursing and faith while others were not clear what “whole person” or “holistic” care meant

- *“Well it is part of who I am, you know...I thought to be a light to those around me, to reach those who are in need...when I got to college, my goals were still the same, to share the love of the Lord”*
- *“That is one of the reasons I chose Roberts because of the holistic approach. At first I thought holistic meant dealing with natural, I knew like having to deal with spiritual being of a person and incorporating that but I thought it was more like dealing with natural remedies and stuff like that “*

# Learning Spiritual Care: In the Classroom

## ■ In the Classroom

- Journaling
- Case studies
- Specific spiritual assessment strategies
- Learning about other faith backgrounds
- Role modeling by faculty members

- *“I actually kept that paper on my clipboard during the time I was working and I would use it sometimes to ask questions of patients, like one of the questions was, what do you do , what do you think about when the chips are down, or like what encourages you?”*
- *“I think in a lot of ways, ..the way it was most well modeled for me was in the lives of my professors. Especially as they took opportunities to spiritually care for their students, then you start to see oh, this is not really all that hard.”*

# Learning Spiritual Care: Clinical Experiences

- Part of each care plan
- Picking up on cues in environment

- *“I got to know them, I noticed they were playing KLOVE, a Christian radio station in their room....when you pick up on those things, it makes it easier, more comfortable to talk to them.”*
- *“So right after the baby was out . . . and the baby is on the warmer two feet away from them . . . I just grabbed my arms around her and we just prayed. I had never prayed with a patient ever but like, I already knew they were Christians. . . I cry every time I think about this. . . . The rest of the nurses were real good and took over.”*

# Learning Spiritual Care: Outside the Classroom

- Campus milieu

- *“I would tell my family that when I walked onto campus and was trying to find what nursing school to go to and I saw the scripture quotes on the walls in the Admission building, I immediately felt like that is where I was supposed to be. This is where I needed to be supported to get through school.”*

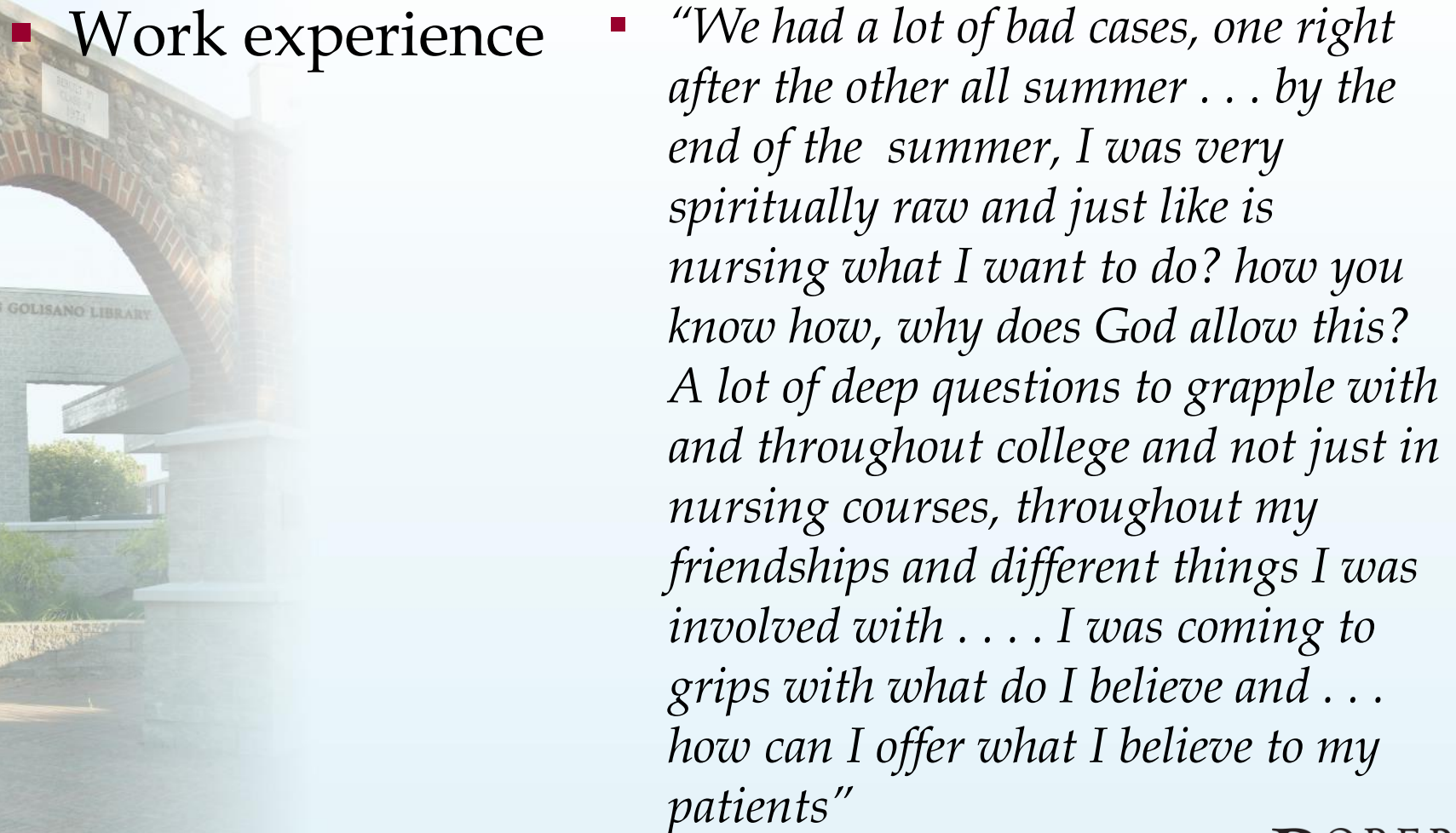


# Learning Spiritual Care: Outside the Classroom

- Co-curricular activities
  - Campus ministries
  - Transcultural nursing trip



# Learning Spiritual Care: Outside the Classroom

- 
- Work experience
  - *“We had a lot of bad cases, one right after the other all summer . . . by the end of the summer, I was very spiritually raw and just like is nursing what I want to do? how you know how, why does God allow this? A lot of deep questions to grapple with and throughout college and not just in nursing courses, throughout my friendships and different things I was involved with . . . . I was coming to grips with what do I believe and . . . how can I offer what I believe to my patients”*

# Providing Spiritual Care

- Connections/ presence
- Empathy
- Identifying spiritual needs
- Barriers and facilitators
- *Putting myself in their shoes*
- *We fixed something in the room and she [the patient] was like, 'Praise the Lord' ...and I said I agree and to just have said that, to be able to relate and talk about how God gets us through our day....[we had] a kind of camaraderie, a good rapport".*

# Facilitators and Barriers to Spiritual Care





# Constitutive Pattern: Building Relationships

- Self and Faith

- *“so as I’ve grown as a person . . . . it has allowed me to be in the place I need to be to have these conversations because I am, more comfortable in the interactions.”*

- Health and Faith

- Recognizing the relationship between health and faith

- Faith and Nursing

- Learning to integrate the spiritual in assessment and care planning

- Nurse-Patient

- Need to have time to build relationships with patients in order to connect deeply to assess and plan for spiritual care.

# Practical Advice

## Advice from Study Participants

Role-model spiritual care in the classroom and clinical setting

Share faith journey with student

Teach students how to care for self

Employ reflection and journaling assignments

Use case studies and stories

Give opportunity to develop own faith/spirituality

Invite guest speakers to address palliative and end of life care

Think about end-of-life as a student

# Practical Advice

- *“Well I think like I said, being an example is the first part, that is probably most important part but I think too there is a lot of freedom to spiritually caring for your patients. The reality is, at least what I have found is that most people won’t say don’t [provide spiritual care] and I think sometimes you just need to hear that you know what, it is okay to spiritually care for patients, to pray with them, and it is okay that you aren’t going to necessarily share their faith view, and yet, you don’t have to change who you are.”*

# Interpretation/Discussion

- Spiritual care can take many forms
- Learned in a variety of settings
- Variety of teaching strategies
- Specific examples of assessment strategies
- Personal experiences of receipt of spiritual care as a student
- Reflection on clinical experiences and their own philosophy
- Whole person care is facilitated
  - Presence
  - Therapeutic communication skills
  - Cognizance of the environment
  - Self care



# Conclusions and Implications

- Teaching Practice
  - Experiential
  - Integrated
- Future Research
  - Understanding how health care organizations
    - Orient nurses to their role
    - Support nurses in spiritual care
  - Understand faculty experiences teaching whole person and spiritual care
  - Universities/Colleges that are not faith based
- Study Limitations

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